

The Walled Nursery  
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### Opening Hours

April – October

Tues - Sat 9.00 – 17.30, Sundays 10.00 - 16.00

November – March

Tues - Sat: 9.00 – Dusk, Sundays 10.00 - 16.00

Please note that we are closed to the public most of  
December and all of January

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## Nursery Description

50 words

A hidden gem nestled in the Kentish High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Walled Nursery offers a spectacular range of plants, mostly grown within their own walls. Admire the 13 Victorian Glasshouses within one of the very few intact Victorian Walled Kitchen Gardens left in the UK today.

100 words

A hidden gem nestled in the Kentish High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Walled Nursery is a family-run business offering a spectacular range of plants and cuttings, mostly grown within their own walls. Admire the 13 Victorian Glasshouses which include a Melon House, Peach House, Fernery and  $\frac{3}{4}$  span Vinery, all contained within one of the few intact Victorian Walled Kitchen Gardens left in the UK. This magnificent setting, formerly part of the Tongswood 'OXO' Estate, also plays host to a series of lectures, courses and events throughout the year – and they serve a great slice of cake.

150 words

A hidden gem nestled in the Kentish High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Walled Nursery is run by husband and wife Emma and Monty Davies, who are always on hand to offer advice and share their knowledge of local topography. The nursery offers a spectacular range of plants and cuttings, mostly grown within their own walls –thanks to the magical fingers of the Head of Propagation, Jacqui Ruthven, formerly of Sissinghurst Castle. Admire the stunning 13 Victorian Glasshouses which include a Melon House, Peach House, Fernery and  $\frac{3}{4}$  span Vinery, all contained within one of the few intact Victorian Walled Kitchen Gardens left in the UK today. This magnificent setting, formerly part of the Tongswood 'OXO' Estate dates back 700 years and alongside lectures on its past and present, plays host to courses, events, fairs, exhibitions and even open-air theatre – and they serve a great slice of cake.

## About our Plants

So, what makes us stand out from the rest? We live, breathe, sometimes eat and grow almost all of our plants. We don't just search through wholesalers' availability lists; we visit gardens and shows, making endless notes and then shopping around for the seeds and stock plants and we are always looking for something new to grow. We are plantaholics! This means that you will find a unique, diverse range of new and rare plants alongside the staples for your garden.

Of course, you only truly know a plant if you grow it yourself. Plants behave very differently in pots than in the ground and our knowledge of local soil topography ensures that we have a wide range of plants particularly good for growing in our 'wonderful' Wealden clay, whilst others are well-suited to our coastal regions. Whatever challenges your garden presents, we can find something to suit you.

Our Head of Propagation, Jacqui Ruthven, former Chief Propagator at Sissinghurst Castle, has transformed our Nursery so that 90% of our plants are now grown from seed or cuttings on site. With concerns about carbon footprints and imported plant diseases on everyone's minds, we hope you not only enjoy our range and quality, but can also take comfort knowing exactly where our plants have come from.

We are fast becoming known for growing a vast range of annuals for beds. If you want to aspire to the 'successional interest' of England's finest gardens such as Sissinghurst Castle or Great Dixter, annuals are what you need. These plants are hard to find but we dedicate our Cucumber glasshouse to these star performers.

We pride ourselves on offering a wide range of annuals such as Ammi majus, Cosmos, Nicotianas, Orleya, Hibiscus trionium, unusual Zinnias and Maurandyas to name but a few. We have a dedicated cut flower border in our nursery which we use to trial our annuals to make sure we only offer the best of the best.

We house around forty varieties of scented Geraniums including Lemon, Rose, Cedar, Cola Bottles, Turkish Delight, Sandalwood, Mint and Orange and of course, we plan to keep extending our range.

We have a huge range of bedding plants for pots and baskets in our glasshouses. You will find numerous varieties of Petunias, Calibrachos, Verbenas, Lantanas, Brachycomes, Lobelia - all of the essentials and the unusual too. Our bedding Geraniums are in our Tomato House and we fill it to the brim with both upright and trailing varieties. We're sure you'll find our range is hard to beat.

We have a saying in our nursery: 'If you wouldn't sell this plant to your Granny, take it away!' We trust all our staff with this responsibility so if you're looking for good quality, interesting plants grown with bundles of enthusiasm, you'll find it all here!

Our range of plants includes, but is not restricted to:

- Annuals
- Bedding
- Climbers
- Cut Flower Plants
- Fruit Plants
- Herbaceous Perennials
- Herbs
- Roses
- Shrubs
- Vegetable Plants

## Our Nursery and Glasshouses

The Walled Nursery is situated on the outskirts of Hawkhurst, Kent, nestled in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Our nursery is set within one of the very few Victorian Walled Kitchen Gardens left intact in the UK today. The Walled Nursery boasts 13 Victorian Glasshouses – a Carnation House, Cold Frame, Cucumber House, Fernery, Hothouse, Melon House, Peach Case, Tomato House and a  $\frac{3}{4}$  span Vinery. They were designed and built by Foster and Pearson Ltd of Nottingham, who were renowned for their horticultural buildings and commissioned on several occasions by Queen Victoria.

Dimensions:

Carnation House: 15m x 5.7m

Cold Frame: 15m x 1.8m

Cucumber House: 15m x 3.6m

Fernery: 8.8m x 4m

Hothouse: 15 x 4.9m

Melon House: 33m x 2.3m

Peach Case: 44.5m x 1.6m

Tomato House: 15m x 5m

Vinery Section i: 6m x 5.5m

Vinery Section ii: 5.4m x 5.5m

Vinery Section iii: 9m x 5.5m

Vinery Section iv: 9m x 5.5m

Vinery Section v: 7.4m x 5.5m

The former Tongswood Estate on which the nursery lies dates back 700 years. The nursery served the house that is now St Ronan's School and the glasshouses are still earning their keep today.

Carnation House – Bedding Plants  
Cold Frame – Hardening-Off Plants  
Cucumber House – Annual Cut Flower Plants  
Hothouse – Propagation from seeds and cuttings  
Melon House – Plant Growing  
Peach Case – Peaches and Nectarines  
Tomato House – Geranium plants and general bedding.  
Vinery – Awaiting renovation

In addition to their more conventional roles, our gardens and glasshouses play host to a series of lectures, courses, festivals and events throughout the year and are available for filming and photography.

We have a self-service outdoor café selling hot and cold drinks as well as delicious home-made cakes.

Our small shop sells locally sourced gifts including homemade jams and chutneys; succulent towers, globes and wreaths; our very popular Kokedama and reconditioned rustic garden tools.

We also have an on-site florist, Astilbe and Sorrel.

## Who We Are and How We Ended Up Here!

### Emma Davies

Confusing geraniums with buttercups might not have seemed the most promising start for a horticulturalist, but that was exactly where Emma found herself, whilst volunteering at the prestigious Great Dixter. Desperate to prove herself and catch the attention of her hero, the indomitable Christopher Lloyd, Emma carried out her task with gusto and confidence. All she had to do was clear the bed of everything except geraniums. Simple. But what she had actually done was clear the bed of everything except flowerless buttercups. To Emma they looked every bit like a flowerless geranium. Convinced she would never get to grips with horticulture Emma wondered if she had done the right thing giving up her high flying job as a Business Consultant in The City.

But rather than scurrying back to The City with her tail between her legs, Emma applied herself and applied herself with devotion and dedication. She studied at Hadlow College and learnt everything she could from her volunteering days at Great Dixter – a place that obviously still holds a special place in her heart. She explains that she'll always be grateful for the support and patience of the staff there and in particular, Fergus Garrett, now Head Gardener.

“I was very lucky,” Emma says. “There were days when I felt I would never understand. But Fergus was so encouraging and kept telling me ‘You can do it, you can do it!’ When someone as respected as Fergus Garrett tells you that, you do start to believe it.”

And Fergus was right. Emma gained her HND in Commercial Horticulture and started work at Pashley Manor Gardens in Ticehurst, before moving on to Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, where she was fortunate enough to again find herself working under another giant in the world of Horticulture, Alexis Datta.

“Lexi was a fantastic teacher,” Emma says. “She’s a very patient and very practical person who really cared about her staff.” Alexis taught Emma how to plant and how to prune into the Sissinghurst ‘Bender’ style whilst also teaching her about the fascinating history of the garden. “And of course,” Emma laughs,



“There’s nothing to teach you quite as fast as having your parterre hedge-cutting checked with a spirit level!”

Emma had successfully made the transition from City Rat Race to her beloved plants and was now working at one of the most iconic gardens in the world. What more could she want? Just one thing wouldn’t leave her mind; a little hidden gem just 8 miles from Sissinghurst; a slightly ramshackle plant nursery with spectacular glasshouses that needed constant renovation, a world away from the financial support and spirit levels of a National Trust property!

### **When Emma met Monty**

Emma had had her eye on the Walled Nursery for a long time – 20 years to be exact. She took every opportunity to come and marvel at the beautiful gardens and glasshouses and struck up a friendship with the owners, Peter and Karen Horn. So when she met Cornishman, Monty Davies, it was one of the first places she brought him to.

Together, they formed the Garden Gate gardening business in 2005 but decided that if the Walled Nursery ever came up for sale, it would be theirs. However, they hadn’t banked on that day arriving when they had a toddler and a two-month-old baby to deal with – and both boys at that!

Monty also had extensive horticulture experience and also studied at Hadlow College. He gained an HND in landscape management and went onto self-employment in the gardening industry. The Walled Nursery however, combined with the challenges presented by the Victorian Glasshouses, was unlike anything either of them had experienced – let alone with two small children.

So Monty and Emma took a deep breath, moved into the Walled Nursery in February 2010 and hit the ground running. “We were completely out of our depth,” Emma laughs. “But we just had to learn on the spot – and what a spot to learn on!”

On the face of it two such different people, Emma’s drive and determination combined with Monty’s philosophical approach to life and instinctive

understanding of nature, have combined to make a team that not only hit the ground running very successfully, but are, against all odds, transforming a Victorian Walled Nursery into a modern day business to be reckoned with.

## Our Team

The Walled Nursery is a family-run business in Hawkhurst, Kent. And when we say family, we don't just mean husband and wife team, Emma and Monty Davies. It could be Emma's dad, Thilo, mowing the lawns; or Emma's twin sister Lucy and mum, Sue, who divide their time between pricking out for us in the spring and running the café during events; or the boys, Rufus and Tommy, helping to pick the vegetables. It really is a team effort. And that team includes our extended family – everyone who gives their time and effort to make the Walled Nursery what we are today.

### **Jacqui Ruthven** – Head of Propagation

Jacqui started her life in horticulture as a teenager in her native New York State. Wanting to see the world, she packed her bags for Pershore College of Horticulture in Worcestershire, where she met her life partner, renowned horticulturalist Alexis Datta.

Two people so passionate about plants were a formidable combination and they were quickly snapped up by the National Trust. Starting out in Buckinghamshire at Dorneywood Garden then Cliveden, they settled here in Kent at Sissinghurst Castle for 22 years, Alexis becoming Head Gardener and Jacqui Chief Propagator.

On taking early retirement, Jacqui was not quite ready to hang up her secateurs. In March 2013, she walked through our gates and took the bull by the horns. Thanks to her vast experience and natural flair, we now grow 90% of our plants within our own four walls – and what plants; such rare, unusual and intriguing specimens! We are very excited to see what she'll come up with next and very grateful to have such a talented lady on our side. Fingers crossed Jacqui doesn't want to fully retire any time soon.

## **Billy & Benny**

Billy and Benny are most likely to be found lazing in our glasshouses during the day, but at night they earn their keep protecting our precious seeds and plants from hungry rodents.

## **Our Volunteers**

Our Volunteers come from all walks of life whether they be young students looking for work experience, busy career people looking to escape the pressures of work for a day or retirees looking to keep busy and find company. In order to make the experience as beneficial for the volunteers and ourselves, we have one devoted day per week for volunteers to visit.

## The Restoration of the Glasshouses

Our Victorian Glasshouses are obviously a little bit special, but we think they are more than just a little bit special – and the Walled Kitchen Gardens Network agrees:

*‘Foster & Pearson Ltd certainly ranks among the best glasshouse manufacturers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This company built glasshouses to the highest standards of craftsmanship and horticultural design, using only the best materials. It is these attributes which have enabled so many of their glasshouses to stand the test of time.*

*Examples of individual Foster & Pearson houses are therefore not unusual, but large, complete ranges are rare. It is for this reason that we believe, as representatives of the Walled Kitchen Garden Network, that the range at Tongswood is a most significant survival. It should definitely be preserved, both for continued horticultural use and as a heritage asset.’*

Susan Campbell

Fiona Grant

Walled Kitchen Gardens Network

We are doing our utmost to preserve these precious pieces of history. However, the fragile nature of our wood and glass structures means that we are in a constant state of restoration and conservation, sometimes exasperated by the British weather. To replace all the glazing bars of just one glasshouse (without the cost of glass) is £5000 and is therefore undertaken in small steps.

### **2010/11**

- Glazing bars in Propagation House damaged by heavy snow

### **2011**

- Replaced sill and headplate in Vinery.
- Most urgent glazing bars replaced in Vinery and other glasshouses

## **2012**

- New vents in Vinery
- Replaced ridge in Vinery

## **2013**

- Replaced 37 glazing bars and re-glazed Propagation House
- Lost glass in the autumn hurricane

## **2013/14**

- Lost 300 panes of glass in the winter storms.
- Carnation House damaged by storms. Requires extensive renovation before re-opening including three new vents, new ridge plate, disconnection of winding gear, new end panel, new headplate and sill.

## **2014**

- Began repairing storm damage to glasshouses
- Further storms cause sink holes

## **2015**

- Carnation House end panel falls away. Roof now resting on rotten sill. All glass removed whilst structure awaits renovation.
- All glass removed from Vinery for safety as condition deteriorates beyond repair. Total rebuild now necessary.

We have received a lot of moral support from our visitors as well as kind requests to donate money. Therefore in 2013 we set up 'The Wall of Pane' sponsorship scheme for visitors to sponsor a pane of glass or a glazing bar, which has enabled us to replace and re-glaze the most damaged parts of the lower glasshouses.

Our largest challenge is, however, the L-Shaped Vinery. The low level of support for the weight of the bars has created a structural weakness in the Fernery section. The design of the L-shape means that replacing the bars in the corner of the Fernery is logistically highly complicated and costly, so we must sadly keep this section closed to the public for now.

We have spent £14,000 on the Vinery in the last five years and she is still not fit for use. The replacement vents did not solve the temperature or condensation problems and large sections of her are still unsafe. The time has come for major structural repairs to be carried out and most of the wood now needs to be totally replaced. This is no mean feat as the Vinery is 47 metres long and 7 metres tall.

After the storms of 2013/14 we made the decision to remove some of the glass in the interest of customer safety. In 2015 we had to remove all remaining panes. We are seeking advice from Victorian glasshouse specialists as well as working with English Heritage and architects to see how this spectacular structure can be restored. We have received quotes upwards from £130,000 and are applying for grants as well as public and private funding.

The most likely option would be a rebuild using modern materials. Whilst we would love to stay as true to the original materials as possible, the British climate, endless maintenance costs and impractical design of the structure is making this unlikely. In addition, the Victorians themselves were progressive innovators who never would have held back in the name of tradition so a modern rebuild would perpetuate the spirit in which our glasshouses were built.

Modern rebuilds have already proved successful at the Little Priory in Surrey as well as Dryffryn in the Vale of Glamorgan suggesting that this could enable the Vinery to flourish once more as a thriving functional structure, rather than an empty shell of constant, rapid deterioration. Additionally, in utilising the Vinery to her full potential, the other glasshouses could be maintained in their original wood and glass structure.

Our vision is to create a new 21st century glasshouse; an educational centre for courses, lectures and workshops and a hub of the horticultural community.

## Our History

### 1273 – 1903

*From knights to clothiers and smugglers to Sheriffs, things have not always been as peaceful at the Walled Nursery as they are today. However, the first 600 years were a time of flourishing growth for the land then known as 'Tongs'.*

The Walled Nursery and neighbouring St Ronan's School once combined to create the Estate known as Tongswood. The place name derived from the fact that two streams of the river Rother flows through the original Estate. Twang or tang is old English, meaning fork of two river streams.

The first record of 'Tongs' was found in the Kent Hundred Rolls: 'Simon held land in Kent in 1273 - Simon de Tonge'. However, it was the birth of the English Cloth Trade in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century that really put Tongs on the map. A Flemish Clothier by the name of Dunk was invited over to England to share his skills and he settled in Kent. It was the early generations of the Dunk family who built the first house on what became known as Tongswood.

Tongswood passed through generations of Dunks, who expanded from cloth to ironworking until, under the watch of Sir Thomas Dunk Kt., the Estate grew to around 1200 acres. Sir Thomas (Sheriff of London, 1711) was a great entrepreneur and highly respected man, given the Freedom of the City of London. He was also a great benefactor and when he died in 1718 he left six almshouses, a school and a school master's house to the village of Hawkhurst.

The executor of Sir Thomas' will, William Richards, inherited the Estate in 1733 on condition he change his name to Dunk. This condition passed down to future heirs and when his daughter Anne inherited the Estate, she therefore became Anne Dunk.

In 1741, Anne married the Hon. George Montagu (2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Halifax), bringing with her the princely sum of £110,000. Montagu, in keeping with the condition of the will, changed his name to Montagu-Dunk. Anne sadly passed away at the tender age of 28 in 1753.

George conveyed Tongs to be leased to Mr Jeremiah Curteis of Rye for 1000 years at the yearly rate of sixpence. Rumours have been whispered about Mr



Curteis for years: that he was the involved in the Hawkhurst Gang – the notorious smugglers terrorising southeast England at the time; that he fled England for France after the murder of a young labourer; that he died of smallpox several years later on a boat returning home.

All these things were almost certainly true of a Mr Jeremiah Curteis of Rye, but was he our Jeremiah Curteis? Our research has recently revealed another Jeremiah Curteis in Rye at the same time. Perhaps less colourful, he was (on the surface at least) infinitely more noble - a lawyer and a town clerk. We are endeavouring to establish which Mr Curteis is ours, but until we prove otherwise, we know which story we prefer!

Whether he be smuggler or lawyer, Mr Curteis moved on from Tongswood and conveyed his interest to William Jenkin (d.1784). From this point until 1841, Tongswood passed through numerous families, but was already becoming noted for her beauty. In 1839, a sale advertisement for a section of the Estate described a farmhouse with outbuildings as a 'complete ferme ornée'. Ferme Ornée Gardens were inspired by the Romantic Movement and sought to emulate Arcadia, a pastoral paradise, combining working farms harmoniously with the beauty of nature.

The first glasshouses were built by Foster and Pearson Limited of Nottingham during the mid to late 1800's. There are no records of the exact year that they were built, but research suggests it may have been around 1870. In 1865 a tea broker named William Cotterill bought the main house and surrounding land for £8750. From this time until 1874, Cotterill carried out extensive work on the house and gardens on a scale not seen before, so it is most likely during this period that the glasshouses were built.

The Estate continued changing hands quite rapidly until 1903 when it was bought by Mr C E Gunther. It was a new century and things were about to change for Tongswood.

## **1903 – 1945 The Gunther Years**

*As a new century dawned, Britain was in the throes of the second phase of the Industrial Revolution. Scientific invention was at its height and the economy was thriving. Unemployment was relatively low and Liberal Welfare Reforms were on the way. Britain – and Tongswood - were moving into a bright, hopeful future, unaware of what was waiting around the corner.*

Charles Gunther bought the Tongswood Estate in 1903. At this time the estate stretched up to Benenden taking in Park Farm, Tilden, Great and Little Ninevah, Woodsden, Forest Farm, Diprose, Hinksden, Stevens Farm and Tongswood Home Farm.

Gunther was High Sheriff of Kent from 1926-1927 and a distinguished businessman. He was Chairman of the Liebig's Extract of Meat Company (founded by his father) as well as Director of OXO, which celebrated 100 years of the OXO cube in 2010.

In 1903, gardening and horticulture was still benefitting from the excitement of the daring Victorian Plant Hunters and it was the height of fashion to have grand houses to show off one's exotic plants. So when Gunther took over the Tongswood Estate, he built more glasshouses. He also added cold frames and made adjustments to the Vinery by adding the Fernery and raising the roofs. Determined to make his mark, he then raised the walls of the gardens.

Tongswood Gardens, as the Walled Nursery was then known, required nine men to tend to the two acre garden and its glasshouses. There were now 13 glasshouses in total, including a vinery, peach house, melon house, fruit house and carnation house. The garden produced beautiful flowers, fruit and vegetables, providing for the main house, their house in London and even surplus produce for the Hawkhurst Cottage Hospital.

It took a fine man to manage such a large concern and that man was Mr Ernest Hardcastle, Head Gardener 1914-45. Mr Hardcastle also worked alongside renowned Quaker botanist, James Backhouse, in designing and building an acre of spectacular rock gardens for Mr Gunther.

While Tongswood was thriving, tragedy was not to spare the Gunther family. In 1910, Charles' first wife, Leonie, died of an illness and in 1914 The Great War

darkened their doors. In 1917, Charles and Leonie's son, Norman, died in Northern France aged just 19 and was awarded the Military Cross. Norman's brother, Charles, died only a year later also in the fields of Northern France, aged 28. 12 other men from the Estate did not return from the War and the Gunthers erected a memorial in honour of those they had lost.

Mr Gunther re-married in 1912. His new wife, Helen Bell, took a great interest in the gardens of the Estate and brought them great acclaim. In 1925, their sub-tropical gardens appeared in *Gardeners' Chronicle*. By 1927, Tongswood Gardens were considered among the top 50 in the country and in 1930, their Rockery was featured in *Country Life Magazine*.

Unfortunately tragedy was to strike again when Charles Gunther died of a heart attack at his shooting lodge at the Paper Mill in 1931. He was 68 years old. Helen then auctioned 670 acres of the outlying portions of the Estate.

In 1939, war returned and the house at Tongswood was requisitioned by the army. Helen moved to a new house, Little Tongs, at the end of Water Lane. After the war in 1945 the estate was sold to St Ronan's School and as for many estates at that time, it was the end of an era.

### **1945 to Present Day**

*It was 1945 and the world would never be the same again. Relief at the end of the war was soon replaced by despair and frustration at continued rationing and inadequate housing. Britain wanted change. Class distinctions were broken down. The modern Welfare State and the NHS were born. The Empire was crumbling and large Estates such as Tongswood also had to change with the times.*

By 1945, the Tongswood Estate was somewhat depleted and what remained was owned by St Ronan's school. The house and the main grounds were utilised by the school, but what should they do with Tongswood Gardens?

Rationing did not come to an end until 1954 and the Dig for Victory campaign was still in place long after the troops came home, so St Ronan's School began to lease Tongswood Gardens to a succession of market gardeners. The first was

Jack Cripps. Jack and his staff – some no more than children – would work their fingers to the bone from dusk to dawn, growing fruit and vegetables to transport around the country and help feed the nation. Later market gardeners included Roland Playford and Jim Weeks. It seemed that Tongswood Gardens had found her place in a post-war world.

However, as Britain moved away from austerity towards supermarket shopping, cheap imported produce and readymade meals, it was never going to be easy to keep such a large concern going – particularly as the glasshouses were slowly being allowed to fall into a substantial state of disrepair. The future began to look uncertain.

Having leased the gardens for a number of years, Peter and Karen Horn had fallen in love with the gardens and the glasshouses. In 1995 they purchased the site and gave it a new lease of life. They turned it into a plant nursery and changed the name from Tongswood Gardens to The Walled Nursery. They began to lovingly restore what glasshouses they could on a micro-budget and are today credited with saving them from total ruin.

Peter and Karen decided to retire but fortunately two more people, who loved The Walled Nursery just as much, were waiting in the wings. In 2010 Monty and Emma Davies purchased the Walled Nursery and took over guardianship of the glasshouses – their Demanding Ladies.

Society was now turning back to home-made produce. Awareness of climate change and dangers of imported diseases from plants was growing. Slowly but steadily, the Walled Nursery was coming back into her own. But there were still the Demanding Ladies to contend with and if you factor in the unpredictable weather and even more unpredictable economy, a simple plant nursery was no longer enough to sustain the constant restoration required.

Monty and Emma did not give up. They introduced a series of courses, lectures and events at the Nursery, including the highly successful Chelsea Fringe. They opened a café which they plan to expand to a restaurant and they are fighting tooth and nail for their Ladies. The Walled Nursery today is no longer just a beautiful place to buy spectacular plants, but an educational centre as well as a unique events venue hosting everything from art exhibitions to Indian Bazaars

to open air theatre, not to mention the perfect spot for a cup of tea and slice of cake.

The Walled Nursery is safe for now. And one suspects that after 700 years of noblemen and charlatans, dreamers and schemers, this little plot of land that started life so long ago as 'Tongs' will be here for a long time yet.

## Timeline

### **1273**

- Tongs held by Simon de Tonge, mentioned in 'Hundred Rolls' of Kent.

### **1512**

- Tongswood recorded as seat of Dunk family ( known as clothiers and later ironworkers)

### **1660**

- Oliver Cromwell stations Ironsides in Hawkhurst. Surrounding land of Tongswood House becomes known as Barrack Fields.

### **1718**

- Sir Thomas Dunk Kt. (Sheriff of London 1711) dies, endowing to Hawkhurst six almshouses, a school for 20 boys, and a house for a school master.

### **1733**

- William Richards inherits estate and according to conditions of will for himself and future heirs, changes his name to Dunk.

### **1741**

- William's daughter, Anne, current owner of estate with fortune of £110,000, marries Hon. George Montagu (2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Halifax), who adds Dunk to his name.

### **1753**

- Anne dies at just 28 years old.
- George Montagu-Dunk (Lord Halifax) conveys lease on Tongswood to Jeremiah Curteis (leader of Hawkhurst Gang) for yearly rent of six pence for 1000 years.

**1767**

- Curteis conveys interest to William Jenkins.

**1784**

- Jenkins dies. Estate is sold to Mr. David Langton then passes through Wilson and Cole families.

**1839**

- Tongswood purchased at auction by Hon. Felix Tollemarche.

**1848**

- Tongswood purchased at auction by Major George Robert Stevenson of the 7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards.

**1861**

- Tongswood inhabited by Mr. Valentin Elwes.

**1868**

- William Cotteril (tea broker) buys estate for £8750.
- Glasshouses built by Foster & Pearson Limited of Nottingham in late 1800's, probably during Cotteril's ownership

**1891**

- Captain John Julian Newton-Spice buys estate.

**1892**

- 'Misses Goldsmid of Portman Square' buy estate – sisters of Sir Julian Goldsmid of Somerhill.

**1903**

- Estate bought by Mr. Charles Gunther, High Sheriff of Kent (1926-27) and chairman of OXO

## **1904**

- More glasshouses added including The Melon House. Adjustments made to the Vinery with The Fernery added and the roofs raised. The walls of the gardens were also raised.

## **1910**

- Gunther's wife, Leonie, dies of an illness.

## **1912**

- Gunther marries Helen Bell who encouraged development of gardens.

## **1914-18**

- Gunther's sons, Charles and Norman (MC), along with 12 other men from the estate, die in WW1. Memorial is erected.

## **1925**

- Tongswood sub-tropical gardens are featured in Gardeners' Chronicle Magazine.

## **1927**

- Tongswood Gardens considered one of top 50 in the country.

## **1930**

- The Rockery is featured in Country Life Magazine.

## **1931**

- Charles Gunther dies of a heart attack (aged 68) at The Paper Mill, his shooting lodge.

## **1936**

- Helen auctions outlying portions of estate.



## **1939-45**

- Tongswood House requisitioned by army during WW2.

## **1946**

- Estate sold to St Ronan's school.
- Walled Garden is leased to a succession of market gardeners including Jack Cripps, Roland Playford and Jim Weeks.

## **1995**

- Peter and Karen Horn buy the garden, turn it into a plant nursery and change the name from Tongswood Gardens to The Walled Nursery.

## **2010**

- Monty and Emma Davies buy The Walled Nursery.
- Shop is re-designed to incorporate locally produced crafts and gifts.
- The Plant Sales area is re-designed and all plants are raised up onto benches.
- The Walled Kitchen Garden Network state the Walled Nursery to hold one of the most intact collection of Victorian kitchen garden glasshouses left in the UK.
- Emma talks on BBC Radio Kent Sunday Gardening Show in what turns into annual updates about the progress of the Nursery.

## **2011**

- Clear overgrowth to extend car park.
- Renovations begin on the Vinery
- The 'working' greenhouse (not Victorian) is replaced with a brand new polytunnel.
- Wealden Times use Nursery as location for fashion shoot.
- First Bazaar at the Walled Nursery.
- Nursery applies for Brown Tourist Sign and is refused by Kent County Council.

## 2012

- Wettest year on record threatens futures of nurseries across the country.
- Campaign for Brown Tourist Sign continues with local media support and public petition. Campaign featured in Kent & Sussex Courier.
- Nursery grows flowers for Heather Appleton's Russian State Garden at Hampton Court Flower Show which won Silver Gilt.
- Online Walled Nursery Gardening Club opens.
- Café opens.
- First commercial filmed at the Walled Nursery – an internet advert for O2.
- '*Memorial to a Memorial*'. Installation by artist, Vivian Pedley, inspired by the men from the estate who died in the Great War.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-19206545>

## 2013

- Jacqui Ruthven, chief propagator at Sissinghurst Castle, joins The Walled Nursery as Head of Propagation.
- Emma discusses the plight of nurseries on Money Box Live on BBC Radio 4
- Inaugural Chelsea Fringe event at the Nursery.
- Wall of Pane Sponsorship Programme introduced for restoration of glasshouses.
- Lecture evenings and courses are introduced at the Nursery.
- Nursery is finally given a Brown Tourist Sign by Kent County Council, increasing visitor numbers immediately.
- Dipingo Design creates greeting cards featuring photos of the Nursery.
- Our conservation of the glasshouses is featured on BBC South East Today News.
- Meridian Tonight News report on the Nursery's preparations for the autumn hurricane.
- Christmas storms batter the Walled Nursery – 300 panes of glass lost in Vinery, Melon House damaged by flooding.

- Request permission from council to save Vinery using powder coated aluminium. Permission denied.

## **2014**

- Further storms and floods cause sinkholes and leave the glasshouses requiring further extensive renovation.
- Repeated discussions with council regarding saving Vinery with powder coated aluminium result in more refusals.
- The Walled Nursery welcomes the Changeling Theatre Company for the first of their annual open air performances at the Nursery.
- Astilbe & Sorrel Florist opens at the Walled Nursery.
- The Walled Nursery is featured on BBC 2's gardening programme *Big Dreams, Small Spaces* with Monty Don.

## **2015**

- Petition started to save the Vinery using powder coated aluminium.
- Carnation House end panel falls away. Roof now resting on rotten sill. All glass removed whilst structure awaits renovation.
- The shepherd's hut arrives at the nursery.
- First Local Makers' Fair held in conjunction with Cranbrook Iron.
- Shortlisted to final three for The English Garden Future Fund bursary scheme.
- Featured in the Sunday Telegraph by Francine Raymond.
- All glass removed from Vinery for safety as condition deteriorates beyond repair. Total rebuild now necessary.

## What They Say About Us

*'One late summer's day, I visited a place that reminded me of an imaginary world in a book... the Walled Nursery. I felt as though I had stumbled into 'The Secret Garden' by Frances Hodgson Burnett'*

Caroline Auckland, Tunbridge Wells Writers

*'...a charming, old-fashioned place to buy plants, seeds and equipment for the garden. Owners Emma and Monty Davies are clearly in love with the place, renovating and maintaining it with genuine care and commitment.'*

Kent & Sussex Guide

*'Monty and Emma's passion and enthusiasm for this rare gem that they've been privileged enough to become custodians of are infectious.'*

Catherine Pitt, Tunbridge Wells Tourist Office

*'Emma and Monty Davies have gained a reputation for propagating rather luscious annuals.'*

Helen Yemm, Daily Telegraph

*'Emma and Monty's passion for their garden's rich heritage is plain to see.'*

Claire Masset, Period Living

*'True nurseries, like Emma and Monty's, are becoming rarer... it's in places such as these that we find specialist growers and unusual plants. We also find depth of knowledge. Yes, it's Emma and Monty's business, but it's also their passion.'*

Nick Farley, The Onion

*'So many beautiful glasshouses, the most complete Victorian/turn of the century set I have ever seen. Grade II listed and absolutely astonishing.'*

Harriet Rycroft, A Parrot's Nest

*'...together they have set up an exceptionally good nursery'*

Francine Raymond, The Sunday Telegraph

*'Emma and Monty have created a plant hunters' and floral lovers' paradise.'*

Life on Pig Row